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Committee on Information

Report of the Committee on Information on its resumed twenty-third session

5-7 September 2001

Addendum

1. The Committee on Information held its resumed session from 5 to 7 September 2001 to consider the final report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the pilot project on the development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations.[1] In paragraph 46 of its draft resolution B entitled "United Nations public information policies and activities", adopted by the Committee by consensus on 11 May 2001, the General Assembly would welcome the progress report[2] of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the pilot project, and in paragraph 47, the Assembly would request the Secretary-General to submit a final report on the results of the pilot project and express its intention to take a final decision on the mandate and allocation of the necessary resources for the establishment of a permanent international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations at the main part of its fifty-sixth session.

2. The Chairman of the Committee made an introductory statement (see annex I to the present report) setting out the programme of work for the resumed session of the Committee, which in his words amounted to deciding if the voice of United Nations Radio would continue to be heard. In his view, "radio unites our planet", and therefore was an essential United Nations information activity.

3. The Interim Head of the Department of Public Information made a statement to introduce the final report of the Secretary-General (see annex II to the present report). He said that the 15-minute radio programme in the six official languages broadcast live from United Nations Headquarters had served to "open up" the Organization, making its work more transparent and giving it the "local voice" which was the aim of all its information activities. He paid tribute to the staff of the Department who had worked long and hard hours on the pilot radio project, as well as to the broadcasting partners around the world who were helping to disseminate the United Nations message. A short montage of the Department's radio programming was then presented to the Committee.

4. The Director, Programme Planning and Budget Division, Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Finance, addressed the Committee and noted that the pilot project had been funded through the redeployment of resources within the Department of Public Information. In the absence of a legislative mandate with regard to the continuation of international broadcasting beyond the pilot phase, he said that no provision had been included in the Secretary-General's proposed programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003. He noted that that had not been an oversight, but standard budgetary procedure. If the Committee on Information decided to recommend to the General

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Assembly the continuation of the project as part of the regular activities of the Department of Public Information, "additional resources in the magnitude of US$ 3.5 million would be required for the next biennium". A statement of programme budget implications arising from such a decision would then be presented to the Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee) and, should that Committee decide to endorse the recommendation, a statement of programme budget implications would be submitted to the Fifth Committee for its consideration of the budgetary aspects and for its recommendation to the General Assembly for a decision at its fifty-sixth session.

5. One delegation, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, emphasized the importance of radio to the developing countries and also noted that the Department's live broadcasts were "striking examples" of its commitment to multilingualism. His Group had drafted new paragraphs 46 and 47 of draft resolution B, which reflected the position of the Group with regard to the future of the Department's international radio broadcasting capacity.

6. Another delegation, speaking on behalf of the Group of Western European and Other States, noted that, clearly, all were agreed that radio must be part of the information activities of the Department of Public Information. The question which remained was how to proceed. His delegation had hoped to see more details included in the final report. While the Committee did not deal with finances, it also did not work in a vacuum and must be aware of cost implications. He asked specifically for a breakdown of the $3.5 million being requested for the international radio project in the new biennium.

7. Two other delegations associated themselves with the position of the Group of 77 and China and supported a permanent international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations.

8. The Interim Head of the Department of Public Information said that additional details on the pilot project were being circulated to the Committee for its review. These included a non-paper by the Secretariat containing a breakdown of the estimated costs of the radio project for the biennium 2002-2003; a distribution list for the daily live broadcasts; and a paper on the dissemination of the broadcasts.

9. Following informal consultations in its open-ended Working Group, the Committee met on 7 September 2001 and decided by consensus to amend draft resolution B on United Nations public information policies and activities by substituting existing operative paragraphs 46 and 47 with four new paragraphs. The revised text of draft resolution B reads:

Draft resolution B
United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Reiterating its decision to consolidate the role of the Committee on Information as its main subsidiary body mandated to make recommendations to it relating to the work of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat,

Concurring with the view of the Secretary-General that public information and communications should be placed at the heart of the strategic management of the United Nations, and that a culture of communications should permeate all levels of the Organization, as a means of fully informing the peoples of the world of the aims and activities of the United Nations, in accordance with the principles and purposes enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, in order to create broad-based global support for the United Nations,

Stressing that the primary mission of the Department of Public Information is to provide, through its outreach activities, accurate, impartial, comprehensive and timely information to the public on the tasks and responsibilities of the United Nations in order to strengthen international support for the activities of the Organization with the greatest transparency,

Expressing its concern that the gap in the information and communication technologies between the developed and the developing countries has continued to widen and that vast segments of the population in developing countries are not benefiting from the present information and technology revolution and, in this regard, underlining the necessity of rectifying the imbalances of the global information and

technology revolution in order to make it more just, equitable and effective,

Recognizing that developments in the information and communication technology revolution open vast new opportunities for economic growth and social development and can play an important role in the eradication of poverty in developing countries and, at the same time, emphasizing that it also poses challenges and risks and could lead to further widening of disparities between and within countries,

Stating that the present developments and rapid changes in the field of information and communication technology have a tremendous impact on the functioning of the United Nations and the Department of Public Information in particular, which may necessitate suitable adjustments in the manner in which the mandate of the Department is implemented,

Noting other initiatives aimed at bridging the digital divide, including those by the World Bank, the International Telecommunication Union, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the Digital Opportunity Task Force of the Group of Eight Nations and the Group of 77 South Summit,

Recalling its resolutions 50/11 of 2 November 1995, 52/23 of 25 November 1997 and 54/64 of 6 December 1999 on multilingualism, and emphasizing the importance of making appropriate use of the official languages in the activities of the Department of Public Information, seeking to reduce the gap between the use of English and the other five official languages,

Stating that the Secretary-General should continue to enhance the effectiveness of the activities of the Department of Public Information,

Welcoming Armenia and the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to membership in the Committee on Information,

I. Introduction

1. *Reaffirms* its resolution 13 (I) of 13 February 1946, in which it established the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, and all other relevant General Assembly resolutions related to the activities of the Department of Public Information;

2. *Calls upon* the Secretary-General, in respect of the public information policies and activities of the United Nations, to continue to implement fully the recommendations contained in paragraph 2 of its resolution 48/44 B of 10 December 1993 and other mandates as established by the General Assembly;

3. *Emphasizes* the importance of the medium-term plan for the period 2002-2005, as approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 55/234, as a guideline that sets out the overall orientation of the public information programme for the Organization's goals through effective communication;

4. *Welcomes* the Millennium Declaration,[3] the ministerial declaration adopted by the Economic and Social Council at the high-level segment of its substantive session of 2000[4] and the Secretary-General's millennium report,[5] which indicate clearly that there is a great amount of hope and concern in the field of information and communications;

5. *Calls upon* States, in accordance with their laws, to make every effort to prevent the use of the traditional media and new information and communication technologies that undermine legitimate Governments and democracy, fan ethnic strife and xenophobia, incite hatred and violence and contribute to any manifestations of extremism;

6. *Acknowledges* the important work carried out by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and its collaboration with news agencies and broadcasting organizations in developing countries in disseminating information on priority issues;

II. General activities of the Department of Public Information

7. *Reaffirms* that the Department of Public Information is the focal point for information policies of the United Nations and

the primary news centre for information about the United Nations and its activities and those of the Secretary-General;

8. *Welcomes* the development of the United Nations News Service by the Department of Public Information, and requests the Secretary-General to continue to exert all efforts to ensure that publications and other information services of the Secretariat, including the United Nations web site and the United Nations News Service, contain comprehensive, objective and equitable information about the issues before the Organization and that they maintain editorial independence, impartiality, accuracy and full consistency with resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly;

9. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications,[6] encourages him to continue the reorientation exercise, while stressing the need to take into account the views of Member States, and requests him to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session;

10. *Emphasizes* that, through its reorientation, the Department of Public Information should maintain and improve its activities in the areas of special interest to developing countries and, where appropriate, other countries with special needs, including countries in transition, and that such reorientation contributes to bridging the existing gap between the developing and the developed countries in the crucial field of public information and communications;

11. *Concurs* with the view of the Secretary-General that the development of a strategic vision linking all the components of the Secretariat with emphasis on planning cooperation within the Organization constitutes the central element for continuing reorientation, and encourages the Department of Public Information to maintain, improve and expand its activities in the areas of special interest to developing countries;

12. *Encourages* the Secretary-General to strengthen the cooperation between the Department of Public Information and other departments of the Secretariat, in particular those dealing with priority issues;

13. *Welcomes* the initiatives that have been taken by the Department of Public Information to strengthen the public information system of the United Nations, and, in this regard, stresses the importance of a coherent and results-oriented approach being undertaken by the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the programmes and funds of the United Nations system involved in public information activities and the provision of resources for their implementation, and that this be done taking into account feedback from Member States on the relevance and effectiveness of its programme delivery;

14. *Requests* the Department of Public Information to continue to ensure the greatest possible access for United Nations guided tours and to ensure that displays in public areas are kept as informative, up-to-date, relevant and as technologically innovative as possible;

15. *Recognizes* the need for the Department of Public Information to increase its outreach activities in all regions, requests the Secretary-General to include, in his next report on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications, an analysis of the present reach and scope of the Department's activities, identifying the widest possible spectrum of audiences and geographical areas which are not covered adequately and which may require special attention, including the appropriate means of communication, and bearing in mind local language requirements;

III. Multilingualism and public information

16. *Emphasizes* the importance of ensuring the full, equitable treatment of all the official languages of the United Nations in all activities of the Department of Public Information, and also stresses the importance of fully implementing its resolution 52/214 of 22 December 1997, in section C of which it requested the Secretary-General to ensure that the texts of all new public documents in all six

official languages, and information materials of the United Nations are made available through the United Nations web site daily and are accessible to Member States without delay;

17. *Requests* the Secretary-General to present updated figures on the use and command of all six official languages by the Department of Public Information staff to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session;

18. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to ensure that the Department of Public Information has appropriate staffing capacity in all official languages of the United Nations to undertake all its activities;

19. *Reminds* the Secretary-General of the need to include in future programme budget proposals for the Department of Public Information the importance of using all six official languages in its activities;

20. *Takes note* of the Internet Publishing Guidelines and in this regard requests the Department of Public Information and the Working Group on Internet Matters to include in these guidelines specific recommendations towards achieving the goal of making all documentation on the web sites available in all six official languages of the Organization;

IV. Promotional campaigns

21. *Recalls* its resolutions 53/202 of 17 December 1998 and 54/254 of 15 March 2000, concerning the designation of the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly as the Millennium Assembly of the United Nations and the convening, as an integral part of the Millennium Assembly, of the Millennium Summit of the United Nations, takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on the millennium promotional campaign,[7] and commends the Department of Public Information for the important role that it played in implementing the promotional campaign;

22. *Appreciates* the Secretary-General's initiatives in promoting 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and, mindful of the importance of drawing international attention to the impact that dialogue among civilizations could have on promoting mutual understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence, encourages the Secretary-General to intensify the promotional campaign through the use of as many broadcasters and languages, in addition to the official languages, as possible, to spread the coverage, with special emphasis on publicizing the findings of the Group of Eminent Persons for the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session;

23. *Recalls* paragraph 10 of General Assembly resolution 55/47 of 29 November 2000, entitled "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010", and, in this context, encourages the Department of Public Information to undertake specific dissemination of information on a culture of peace, keeping in mind the ongoing Decade;

24. *Recognizes* the need for enhanced publicity through a targeted strategy to be developed by the Department of Public Information on the special sessions and conferences, including on the least developed countries, children, illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, HIV/AIDS, racism, the environment, financing of development, sustainable development, and ageing, which will address issues crucial to the international community, particularly the developing countries, as well as on the ongoing Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, and requests the Secretary-General to take the necessary action in this regard and report to the Committee at its twenty-fourth session in the context of his report on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications;

25. *Recalls* its resolutions 53/59 B of 3 December 1998 and 54/82 B of 6 December 1999, and urges the Department of Public Information to take the necessary measures, through the provision of relevant and objective information, towards achieving the major objectives set forth in the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable

development in Africa,[8] and to publicize the activities of the open-ended working group established for that purpose;

26. *Also recalls* its resolutions concerning the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, in particular resolutions 51/138 of 13 December 1996 and 52/172 of 16 December 1997, and encourages the Department of Public Information, in cooperation with the countries concerned and with the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, to continue to take appropriate measures to enhance world public awareness of the consequences of that disaster;

27. *Further recalls* its resolution 55/44 of 27 November 2000, concerning international cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan, which has been affected by nuclear tests, and encourages the Department of Public Information, in cooperation with relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, to take appropriate measures to enhance world public awareness of the problems and needs of the Semipalatinsk region;

V. Bridging the digital divide

28. *Commends* the Secretary-General for the establishment of the United Nations Information Technology Service, the Health InterNetwork and the Information and Communications Technology Task Force with a view to bridging the digital divide and as a response to the continuing gulf between developed and developing countries, welcomes the contribution of the Department of Public Information in publicizing the efforts of the Secretary-General in closing the digital divide as a means of spurring economic growth and as a response to the continuing gulf between developed and developing countries, and, in this context, requests the Department further to enhance its role;

VI. United Nations information centres

29. *Stresses* that the United Nations information centres and information components should continue to play a significant role in disseminating information about the work of the Organization to the peoples of the world, in particular in the areas of economic and social development;

30. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Integration of United Nations information centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme: implementation of the views of host Governments",[9] welcomes the action taken by the Department of Public Information to implement the views of those host Governments as expressed in their replies to the questionnaire provided by the Secretariat, and requests the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps for the continued implementation of those views and to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session;

31. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session on any possible proposal to continue, if feasible and on a case-by-case basis, the integration policy in a cost-effective manner, while maintaining the operational and functional independence of United Nations information centres, taking into account the views of the host countries to ensure that the information functions and the autonomy of United Nations information centres are not adversely affected, to meet the policy's stated objective of improving the provision of information by the United Nations;

32. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to include in his report on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications, to be submitted to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session, information on the involvement of the Department of Public Information in the context of the implementation of his recommendations on the establishment of United Nations houses;

33. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the equitable disbursement of resources to United Nations information centres,[10] emphasizes that further efforts are needed to ensure the most equitable disbursement possible of resources to United Nations information centres, and stresses that particular attention should be paid to the concerns of

developing countries and, where appropriate, other countries with special needs, including countries in transition;

34. *Emphasizes* that the United Nations information centres, as the "field voice" of the Department of Public Information, should promote public awareness and mobilize support for the work of the United Nations at the local level, and recognizes the appeal made by the Secretary-General to the host Governments of United Nations information centres to facilitate the work of the centres in their countries by the provision of rent-free or rent-subsidized office space, while taking into account the economic condition of the host Governments and bearing in mind that such support should not be a substitute for the full allocation of financial requirements for the United Nations information centres in the context of the programme budget of the United Nations;

35. *Reaffirms* that the United Nations information centres should continue to publicize United Nations activities and accomplishments in the areas of economic and social development, poverty eradication, debt relief, health, education, the elimination of illiteracy, women's rights, children's rights, the plight of children in armed conflict, the sexual exploitation of children, the eradication of drug trafficking, environmental issues, peace and security, and other relevant issues;

36. *Also reaffirms* the role of the General Assembly in relation to the opening of new United Nations information centres, invites the Secretary-General to make such recommendations as he may consider necessary regarding the establishment and location of such centres, and, in this regard, welcomes the requests by the Governments of Croatia, Gabon, Guinea, Haiti, Jamaica and Kyrgyzstan for information centres or information components;

37. *Takes note* of the efforts by some United Nations information centres to develop their own web pages in local languages, and, in this respect, encourages the Department of Public Information to provide resources and technical facilities, in particular to United Nations information centres whose web pages are not yet operational, to develop web pages in the respective local languages of their host countries, and encourages host Governments to respond to the needs of United Nations information centres;

VII. Role of the Department of Public Information in United Nations peacekeeping

38. *Takes note with appreciation* of the efforts of the Secretary-General to strengthen the public information capacity of the Department of Public Information for the establishment and day-to-day functioning of the information components of peacekeeping and other field operations of the United Nations, and requests the Secretariat to continue to ensure the involvement of the Department from the planning stage of such future operations through interdepartmental consultations and coordination with other departments of the Secretariat, in particular with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session in 2002, including any possible proposals for enhancing the role of the Department in this regard;

39. *Notes* the ongoing discussion on the report of the Secretary-General on resource requirements for implementation of the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations,[11] and, in this regard, stresses that the Department of Public Information should continue its efforts to strengthen its capacity to significantly contribute to the functioning of information components in United Nations peacekeeping operations and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session in the report requested in paragraph 38 above;

40. *Stresses* the importance of enhancing the public information capacity of the Department of Public Information in the field of peacekeeping operations and its role in the selection process of spokespersons for United Nations peacekeeping operations or missions, and, in this regard, encourages the Department to second spokespersons who have the necessary skills to fulfil the tasks of the operations or missions, and to consider views expressed, especially by host countries, when appropriate, in this regard;

VIII. Dag Hammarskjöld Library

41. *Takes note* of the continuing efforts of the Secretary-General to make the Dag Hammarskjöld Library a virtual library with world outreach, making United Nations information and other acquired materials accessible electronically to a growing number of readers and users, and, at the same time, requests the Secretary-General to enrich on a multilingual basis the stock of books and journals in the Library, including publications on peace and security and development-related issues, to ensure that the Library continues to be a broadly accessible resource for information about the United Nations and its activities;

42. *Encourages* the Library to alert its clientele, including Member States through their missions, for example, via electronic mail, of any new publications and collections;

43. *Welcomes* the training courses conducted by the Dag Hammarskjöld Library for the representatives of Member States and Secretariat staff on Cyberseek, web search, the Intranet, United Nations documentation, UN-I-QUE and the optical disk system, and, in that regard, encourages the Library to further develop such courses;

44. *Also welcomes* the role of the Department in fostering increased collaboration among libraries of the United Nations system, particularly in establishing one central system-wide online catalogue that will allow for the searching of the bibliographic records of all print holdings of all United Nations system libraries and the searching of all electronic holdings and electronic databases maintained by all United Nations system libraries, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session in the context of his report on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications;

45. *Requests* the Department of Public Information to ensure the continued development of the integrated library system in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session in the context of his report on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications;

IX. Traditional means of communication: radio, television and publications

46. *Welcomes* the progress report[12] and the final report[13] of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the pilot project on the development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations, and also welcomes the extensive network of partnerships established with local, national and regional broadcasters in Member States, and concurs with the Secretary-General that the project has contributed to the overall goal of the Department of Public Information of generating understanding about the United Nations among millions of listeners across the globe and has been one of the more successful examples of the reorientation of the Department;

47. *Decides*, building upon the success of the pilot project as well as the scope of its programme distribution and established partnerships, to expand the international radio broadcasting capacity of the United Nations in all six official languages;

48. *Requests* the Secretary-General to convey the necessary justification of the resource requirements, including information on the possibility of extrabudgetary financing and/or the redeployment of resources, concerning the expansion of the international radio broadcasting capacity for the 2002-2003 biennium for consideration by the relevant committees of the General Assembly;

49. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to submit a report on the implementation of the United Nations international radio broadcasting capacity to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fifth session, including information that can be obtained from the local, national and regional radio partners about the estimated number of listeners reached, in order for the Committee to decide on the future of this capacity;

50. *Stresses* that radio remains one of the most cost-effective and far-reaching traditional

media available to the Department of Public Information and an important instrument in United Nations activities, such as development and peacekeeping, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/44 B;

51. *Takes note* of the efforts under way by the Department of Public Information to disseminate programmes directly to broadcasting stations all over the world in the six official languages as well as in other languages, and, in that regard, stresses the need for impartiality and objectivity concerning information activities of the United Nations;

52. *Requests* the Department of Public Information, in view of the need for efficiency and for a wider dissemination of information services of the United Nations Radio, to enhance where necessary the use of non-official languages to meet the information needs of its audiences;

53. *Encourages* the Department of Public Information to continue to include in its radio and television programming specific programmes addressing the needs of developing nations;

54. *Expresses its appreciation* to the Department of Public Information for the ongoing programme for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries and countries in transition, and calls for its further continuation along the lines of its current implementation, while including a larger number of trainees from those countries;

55. *Emphasizes* that all publications of the Department of Public Information, in accordance with existing mandates, should fulfil an identifiable need, should not duplicate other publications of the United Nations system and should be produced in a cost-effective manner;

X. United Nations web site

56. *Notes*, while appreciating current efforts, that there is a need for the Secretary-General to continue to develop proposals for the multilingual development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site in order to ultimately lead to achieving full parity among the official languages of the United Nations, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session;

57. *Requests* the Secretary-General in the meantime and until a decision has been taken on the proposals to be presented for the multilingual development, maintenance and enrichment of the United Nations web site, to ensure, to the extent possible, while maintaining an up-to-date and accurate web site, the equitable distribution of financial and human resources within the Department of Public Information allocated to the United Nations web site among all official languages on a continuous basis;

58. *Requests* the Department of Public Information, as the manager of the Organization's web site, to take the lead in developing a proposal for the establishment of one central Internet portal that will encompass all web sites of the United Nations system, preferably through system-wide cooperation, and that will allow for the search and retrieval of information from all web sites in the United Nations system from one central search facility, and requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session in the context of his report on the reorientation of United Nations activities in the field of public information and communications;

59. *Stresses* the importance of access to United Nations Treaty Collection and United Nations parliamentary documentation for the public;

60. *Commends* the efforts of the Information Technology Services Division of the Office of Central Support Services in ensuring that the required technological infrastructure is in place to accommodate the imminent linkage of the optical disk system to the United Nations web site;

61. *Recognizes* the far-reaching impact that the linking of the optical disk system with the United Nations web site will have in furthering the goals of the Organization by making all parliamentary documents in the six official languages publicly available, and stresses that the integration of the optical disk system with the United Nations web site will represent one of the steps towards significantly enhancing the

multilingual nature of the United Nations web site and will lead to efficiencies in all Secretariat departments;

62. *Takes note with interest* of the electronic mail-based news alert service distributed worldwide by the Department of Public Information, and emphasizes that extra care needs to be taken to ensure that news-breaking stories and news alerts are accurate, impartial and free of any bias;

63. *Encourages* the Secretary-General, through the Department of Public Information, to continue to take full advantage of recent developments in information technology, including the Internet, in order to improve, in a cost-effective manner, the expeditious dissemination of information on the United Nations, in accordance with the priorities established by the General Assembly and taking into account the linguistic diversity of the Organization;

64. *Encourages* an increase in the number of programmes of United Nations Radio, in all available languages, on the United Nations web site;

XI. Final remarks

65. *Recognizes* the need for constructive interaction between the management of the Department of Public Information and members of the Committee on Information, and requests the Department of Public Information to arrange, in consultation with the Chairman, informal meetings with the members of the Committee every three months to discuss the ongoing work of the Department, and in this regard requests the Department, in preparation for these meetings, to invite members of the Committee, no later than two weeks prior to their convening, to propose topics for discussion;

66. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session and to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution;

67. *Requests* the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session;

68. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-seventh session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".

Notes

[1] A/AC.198/2001/10.

[2] A/AC.198/2001/7.

[3] Resolution 55/2.

[4] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/55/3), chap. III, para. 17.

[5] A/54/2000.

[6] A/AC.198/2001/2.

[7] A/AC.198/2000/10.

[8] A/52/871-S/1998/318.

[9] A/AC.198/2001/4.

[10] A/AC.198/2001/5.

[11] A/55/507 and Add.1.

[12] A/AC.198/2001/7.

[13] A/AC.198/2001/10.

Annex I

Statement by the Chairman of the Committee on Information at the opening of the resumed twenty-third session of the Committee

[Original: French]

On 11 May 2001, at the conclusion of its annual session, the Committee on Information decided to resume its session in early September in order to consider the final report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the pilot project on the development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations and finalize the recommendations to be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session.

The Secretariat submitted the final report (A/AC.198/2001/10) to the members of the Committee in good time and the Committee is therefore in a position, at this resumed twenty-third session, to consider in depth the question of developing an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations.

Before moving on to the subject which brings us here today, I should like to share with you my impressions of the work done by the Department of Public Information since May. In my capacity as the new Chairman of the Committee and in order to be better equipped to direct our work, I visited various sections and units of the Department and observed some of its many activities first hand. Let me say here that I was impressed by the excellent work done by the Department, often under difficult conditions and with limited means. Credit is due, first and foremost, to its Interim Head, Mr. Shashi Tharoor, who with his extraordinary energy, boundless creativity and prudent management has succeeded in making the best possible use of a staff to whom I also wish to pay tribute.

The subject of our resumed session is limited, but important, in that it involves recommending to the General Assembly what radio broadcasting policy the United Nations should pursue from here on. More specifically, the Committee on Information, after considering the results of the pilot project on the development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations, which was launched in August 2000 and will continue through the end of this year, must recommend what follow-up to give to this activity. Our task is therefore fraught with consequences, since it is up to us to set the future course of United Nations radio broadcasting. I should like to comment on first the substantive and then the procedural aspects of this issue.

First, radio remains the most popular and most universally accessible medium in the world. Today, in least developed and industrialized countries alike, in cities and remote rural areas, for individuals or for the poorest among them, communities have a radio or at least a transistor and have access to world news. Radio is omnipresent. While the digital divide continues to separate North and South, radio unites our planet.

A number of countries have realized this for some time and have encouraged the establishment of radio stations which transmit news from their capital cities via short-wave to audiences worldwide.

After transmitting its radio broadcasts for nearly 40 years over the air waves of a major radio broadcasting station, *Voice of America*, the United Nations had been reduced since 1986 to distributing its broadcasts mainly in the form of tapes and cassettes.

The pilot project has revolutionized this approach and for the past year the United Nations has been transmitting daily newscasts in the six official languages. Mr. Tharoor will give us details of this project, which has completely modernized United Nations radio broadcasting when he presents the final report of the Secretary-General.

We must all keep in mind that the voice of the United Nations, in the true sense of the word, is now heard by millions of listeners in some 100 countries and in all six official languages of the Organization.

And it is up to us, the Committee on Information, to say whether that voice should continue to be heard, and heard ever more widely, by suggesting how this project should be followed up. The Department of Public Information has no mandate in this area beyond the end of the year and it is up to us to recommend whether the project should continue or not.

Our Committee has three days of meetings in which to do so. I should like you to know that, in order to plan how best to use this short period of time, I

convened a meeting of our Bureau last Friday, 31 August. It is on the basis of its deliberations that I would make the following suggestions.

The purpose of our resumed session, as indicated in paragraph 1 of the final report of the Secretary-General, is to enable the General Assembly to take a final decision on the mandate and allocation of the necessary resources for the establishment of a permanent international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations. To be precise, the Committee must review section IX, "Traditional means of communication: radio, television and publications", of draft resolution B, entitled "United Nations public information policies and activities", contained in the Committee's report.[1] More particularly, the Committee will look at paragraphs 46 and 47 of draft resolution B with a view to amending them as required.

Secondly, with regard to the organization of our work, we should like to suggest that the texts proposed for paragraphs 46 and 47 should be introduced at this opening meeting, after the Interim Head of the Department of Public Information has presented the final report and the Director of the Programme Planning and Budget Division of the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts has commented on the resources that would be needed for a permanent radio broadcasting capacity. Thereafter, the proposed texts would be considered in informal consultations, culminating tomorrow in the presentation of the draft report at a formal meeting and followed 24 hours later, on Friday, 7 September, by the adoption of the report. I hope that these suggestions, which have been endorsed by the Bureau, are acceptable to the Committee members and will enable us to bring the twenty-third session of the Committee on Information to a final, and successful conclusion.

In closing, I should like to express my belief that the members of the Committee on Information will demonstrate at this resumed session the same spirit of consensus as characterized the first part of our session in May.

Now more than ever, the United Nations, which was re-energized by the Millennium Summit, needs a Department of Public Information that is equipped with modern, effective means of communication. I appeal to all the members of the Committee to rise together to the challenge and choose the best possible radio broadcasting policy for the United Nations in the twenty-first century. May radio, whose range is universal and which unites all the citizens of the world, also be a means for the Committee on Information to make its voice — a strong, united voice — heard.

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21* (A/56/21).

Annex II

Statement by the Interim Head of the Department of Public Information at the opening of the resumed twenty-third session of the Committee on Information

[Original: English]

It is a privilege for me to address the Committee on Information at the start of its resumed twenty-third session and to introduce the final report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the pilot project on the development of an international radio broadcasting capacity for the United Nations (A/AC.198/2001/10).

As you will recall, last May, in paragraph 46 of the draft resolution B which the Committee submitted to the General Assembly, the Assembly would welcome the progress report of the Secretary-General on this subject and concur with him in his view that the implementation of the pilot project was "one of the more successful examples of the reorientation of the Department of Public Information".

In paragraph 47 of the same draft resolution, the General Assembly would request the Secretary-General to submit a final report on the results of the radio project and express its intention to take a final decision on the mandate and allocation of the necessary resources for the establishment of a permanent international radio broadcasting capacity, which would be considered by the Assembly at its fifty-sixth session.

The daily 15-minute newscasts produced by United Nations Radio in each of the six official languages have proved a revolutionary innovation in the efforts of the Department of Public Information to communicate its message more effectively to a global audience. Using a medium that is more universally accessible than any other, the United Nations has been able through this pilot project to broadcast news of United Nations developments to every region of the world. From the steppes of Central Asia to the remotest villages of Central Africa and the Gobi desert and the Andes mountains, and on the streets of Cairo, Karachi and New York can now be heard the voices of presidents, prime ministers and ambassadors debating pressing international concerns in the General Assembly and the Security Council, as well as those of the Secretary-General and his colleagues at Headquarters and in the field. There are literally tens of millions of listeners around the world who daily hear what *their* Organization is doing in order to improve their lives and bring security to troubled regions.

And it is not merely news from Headquarters that is being captured. Indeed, nearly 60 per cent of each day's broadcast comes from United Nations activities from around the world, with listeners hearing a force commander discuss the progress that a peacekeeping mission is making in disarming combatants, or a peasant family describing how a United Nations anti-desertification programme is supporting its village's efforts to make its environment more fertile.

As you can imagine, the pilot programme constitutes a historic achievement not only for the Department of Public Information but for the Organization itself, which never before was able to take its message directly to so many millions of listeners around the world. And for this achievement we must thank our hundreds of partner stations who have made all this possible by setting aside the time in their daily broadcast schedules for the United Nations programme. We are most grateful also to Member States that have encouraged their national broadcasters to consider our requests sympathetically. As indicated in the report, these are broadcasters with enormous national and international audiences, and include China International Radio, the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria, Radio Caracas, the Voice of Russia, Radio Cairo, Afrique No. 1, Canal Educatif de la Francophonie and the Caribbean Media Corporation, as well as many others.

These programmes of United Nations Radio have brought a new energy to the work of the Department, and have also served to "open up" the Organization, to make its work more transparent and to give it a "local voice", which is the aim of all our information activities.

One gauge of this project's success can be found in the letter we received in July from the Director-General of China International Radio, our largest

partner station. Praising the daily news broadcasts, he wrote that they had "nurtured a tremendous interest among Chinese listeners, as it is the only programme coming directly from the United Nations". Numerous listeners had written to him to convey their appreciation to United Nations Radio.

The radio project, I would like to add, is the key component, along with the United Nations News Service to be launched later this month, of the Department's drive to bridge the gap in the ability of the media in the industrialized and developing countries to obtain immediate access to United Nations news developments.

Media in most developing countries, as you know, do not have the resources to post correspondents to United Nations Headquarters. What is no less important, I would like here to emphasize also, with daily broadcasts in each of the Organization's six official languages, the radio project represents a striking example of the Department's commitment to multilingualism and to achieving full parity among the official languages of the United Nations.

In the Department's daily pursuit of the most up-to-date informative content, our live programming also provides new opportunities for enhancing cooperation within the United Nations system. Producers of United Nations Radio are in contact with the specialized agencies, funds and programmes, as well as United Nations information centres and peacekeeping operations, to tap the vast information reserve of the United Nations. To give one example, for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, United Nations Radio has four producers in Durban sending daily reports for radio news and feature stories. As you will see from the very brief video presentation that follows, these reports concern all the themes of the Conference, not merely the ones which so much of the world's media have chosen to focus upon exclusively.

Our live radio broadcasts are made available on the United Nations web site almost immediately and are disseminated through arrangements with international, regional and national partner stations and communications networks worldwide via satellite, electronic file transfer, short wave and telephone feeds. Some broadcasters which generate their own original materials have also begun to use parts of our broadcast. I must acknowledge, however, that our antiquated broadcast infrastructure does pose a challenge to the widest possible dissemination of our daily broadcasts and we are looking at some new options to enhance our outreach.

I hope you will permit me to express my appreciation to all those working in the Radio Section. Given the intense competitive pressures under which all major broadcasters work, the fact that so many leading radio stations have agreed to set aside 15 minutes of their daily schedule for United Nations news bulletins reflects the consistent high quality of the programmes our team produces. Quality aside, let me also express appreciation for the staff's dedication: they come in very early every day to gather news from United Nations activities around the globe and they also produce programmes on all United Nations holidays at Headquarters, be it Labour Day this week, Thanksgiving or Christmas.

The Committee on Information has always understood the importance of radio as a cost-effective and far-reaching means of United Nations outreach, particularly for developing countries. For our part, the Department is grateful to the Committee for its vision and guidance in encouraging United Nations Radio to develop the ability to bring the United Nations message directly into peoples' homes around the world and, in the process, to establish itself as an important international broadcaster.

The moment of truth, however, is now upon us. The Department has no mandate to continue live radio programming beyond this year. Consequently, there are no budgeted resources for the upcoming biennium. As you see in paragraph 29 of the final report, should the General Assembly so decide, the estimated required resources to continue the project in the biennium 2002-2003 would be approximately US$ 3.5 million.

So far, it is estimated that the total cost of the pilot project through 31 December 2001 will amount to $1.9 million, covered through the reallocation of the Department's existing resources and, I regret to say, at the expense of some of our regular activities. And it should be noted that no extrabudgetary resources to support the project have been forthcoming, nor is there any realistic prospect of their materializing.

I hope the esteemed members of this Committee will agree with the Chairman of the Committee that United Nations Radio has the potential to transform the way in which the United Nations message reaches its

international audience. Member States must now decide if the Department is to build upon its success and convert a pilot project into a permanent international radio broadcasting capacity. It is, of course, up to this distinguished Committee to make an appropriate recommendation to the General Assembly for endorsement at its fifty-sixth session.

If I may, let me add that the bleak — and indeed deplorable — alternative to the live radio news programming used to be that our Radio Section recorded interesting programmes, but these were dubbed on tape, packaged and mailed to broadcasters, often arriving weeks later at their destination. Obviously, we would not want to return to such a procedure, especially now that we and our clients have seen the benefits of live programming, and it would be a pity to lose the effective and useful working relationships we have established with all the broadcasters that have joined us as partners in this innovative and path-breaking project.

I would like to conclude by referring to the Secretary-General's address to the General Assembly this past June upon his appointment to a second term. In it, he expressed the hope that five years from now, the peoples of the world would feel that the United Nations was closer to them, working better to fulfil their needs and placing their welfare at the centre of its work. As the Chairman has made clear in his remarks, and I trust the Committee would agree, it is clear that the Department's direct, daily radio broadcasts would serve as a concrete, and now proven vehicle for helping the Secretary-General realize this special vision for the Organization.